2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl

travelers, dressed in their brightest, newest garments, were speeded on their way. The friends and relatives loaded them with money and presents of clothing, food, and wool, which the pilgrims were to donate to the great and holy monastery. The whole ceremony of leave-taking was made a part of the bright landscape by the flowers everywhere—on the dress of the pilgrims, fastened to the gifts, and carried in huge bunches. Upon their return a few days later the dusty pilgrims were met at the outskirts of the village and escorted home through the blue twilight by those eager to hear of every adventure during the days and nights in the great mountains, whose jagged walls have protected Rila Monastery for hundreds of years.

Formal piety, as shown in pilgrimages, was only one of the major characteristics which these Bulgarian villagers possessed. The Dragalevtsy people, especially the men, were predominantly literate. Bulgaria, despite what seems a forbidding Cyrillic alphabet, has the highest rate of literacy of all Balkan countries, a fact which can be attributed to the tendency to regard education as a panacea for individual and social ills. While only 44 per cent of the women over fifteen years of age could read and write, 92 per cent of the men were literate. Of course, I often came upon groups of peasants crowded around a friend slowly spelling out a newspaper article aloud, but these little clusters of attentive listeners originated because of the scarcity of newspaper subscribers, not necessarily because of illiteracy.

The Dragalevtsy people were also law-abiding. During the first three years I knew the village, and informants said that the record went much farther back than that, no Dragalevtsy peasant had been taken to Sofia for imprisonment. There was no local jail, nor any need for one. This was not a sign of the inefficiency of local police, but rather an indication of the peaceable and honest traits of the people.

In many other characteristics the villagers shared what have come to be known as the universal "rural virtues," for theirs was an agrarian way of life. More than three-fourths of the family heads were peasant proprietors. In addition to these, there were two other occupational groups: the intellectuals and the artisans. Despite their small number, the intelligentsia, as they were called by the peasants, were the most influential group in the community. Whenever the

11: Logio S-4 (no date) 1936 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

lace favourite, and General Russev, the Minister of the Interior. Impartial politicians in Bulgaria generally absolve Tsankov of this violence. Thus, M. Muchanov speaking in the Sobranye on April 1, 1926 stated: 661

„1924 and 1925 were not normal years. Never before had we such internal unrest and such fratricidal struggles in Bulgaria. I understand the mentality of those who were administering the country at the time. In many cases they carried out their duty in a worthy manner, but at many placed certain exaggerations occurred, but I personally shall abstain from blaming the Minister of the Interior for these."

And the Radical leader Kosturkov, who was one of the most outspoken critics of the Tsankov administration equally admitted in the Sobranye on December 21, 1926: „The Tsankov Government had been provoked by the Agrarians and Communists and the blood it shed was in self-defence".

The advent of the Liaptchev administration coincided with the temporary exhaustion of the Agrarians and for some time relative tranquillity prevailed which permitted the Government to devote its attention to the pursuance of its financial programme and the raising of loans, which can hardly be said to have aided the country, as may be inferred from a perusal of the chapter devoted to the story of the League of Nation's loans[1] 643

Another act by which this administration is likely to be remembered was the voting in 1929 of a large amnesty which included Radoslavov and Tontchev, rightly condemned by a State Court for violating the Constitution and facilitating Tsar Ferdinand's efforts to plunge Bulgaria into the war on the side of the Central Powers in opposition to the manifest desire of the people. The other colleagues of Radoslavov had already benefited from a previous amnesty, but public opinion at the time was utterly opposed to the inclusion in it of these two ex-Ministers. By granting an amnesty to these two discredited politicians who 643 697

[1] Cf. cat. 110, pp. 84–118 — Analyst]

643 had stopped at no crime in order to further their nefa-
697 rious designs, the Government dealt a heavy blow to the prestige of Justice and undermined among the people confidence in law and morality. The real aim of the Goverment in passing this measure was to emancipate itself from the threat of finding itself placed in a minority through the defection of its more idealistically minded supporters, who very often disapproved of its policy By winning over the partisans of Radoslavov by the grant of an amnesty to their leaders, the Government was hoping that it would ward off such a threat by eventually replacing their disgruntled followers by the Radoslavovists. Apparently the moral code of the trinity at the head of the government was not a very strict one as is manifest from the financial policy it foisted on the country and the liabilities it so lightheartedly assumed.

669 The commuting of punishments, and the granting of amnesties does not seem to have appeased either the Agrarians or the Communists, for towards the end of 1929 there was a distinct recrudescence in their activities. Armed bands penetrated from Yugoslavia and committed depredations and murders. A train was stopped and the passengers robbed, a number of judges were arrested and brutally shot near Sevlievo, the leader of the criminal band, responsible for these crimes, the notorious Dontso Uzunov, later took refuge in France, and though the Bulgarian Government applied for his extradition, this was refused on the pretext that the crime committed was of
661 a political character. The Government and its supporters paid little heed to the needs of the country, they were too intent on dividing among themselves the spoils of office. The booty was abundant, as it had been increased by the foreign loans recently concluded and there was enough for all their hungry followers. Millions were being showered upon prominent supporters of the Government

6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe
Bulgaria EE

War a program of cooperative farming was inaugurated on a voluntary membership basis, the vast majority of farmers were small landowners of the type which once was so characteristic of the Ukraine. As early as August, 1945, the first of a series of decrees was promulgated, to liquidate the hated kulak and incorporate him into the kolkhoz, or State farm, system. At the same time a blueprint of industrialization was drawn, on the basis of the familiar Two- and Five-Year Plans. The blueprint required first of all cheap compulsory labor in quantity. The published legislation outlines the methods by which that labor force was to be obtained. The police received authority "to commit to communities for educational labor, or to a new place of residence, persons guilty of fascist or antidemocratic manifestations." It was also decreed, soon after the seizure of power, that many hundreds of thousands of persons should be "sent to the factories or shifted to industry." On none of these matters was any effort made to maintain secrecy.

Soon dams and electric power plants were being constructed in various parts of the country. The exploitation of Bulgaria's very modest coal deposits was greatly intensified. In order to supply the needed labor force, concentration camps were erected in a surprising variety of places. One of the better known is that at Belene, the inmates of which work at digging canals. Here are cooped up many prominent Bulgarian intellectuals, businessmen, and officers of divers political organizations once opposed to Communism. The Communists themselves have advertised widely this camp, where, it is estimated, 9,000 persons are interned under the most primitive penal conditions. If the accounts of prisoners who have escaped from it are to be credited (and there is no reason why they should not be), it is in all truth an infamous place. The methods of committing people to it have been spelled out in carefully devised legislation, which makes no provision for haling anyone before

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a court for trial and sentence. The Law on Labor Mobilization of Idlers and Vagrants, originally enacted on April 30, 1946, and subsequently amended announced: 697 466 [671]

Section 1. All Bulgarian nationals of both sexes, between 16 and 50 years of age [45 for women], fit for work but who have taken to idling and vagrancy or who spend most of their time in saloons, coffee shops, bars, pastry shops, and the like, shall be mobilized for compulsory labor.

Section 2. The purpose of the labor mobilization shall be to make the draftees accustomed to useful work, to develop in them a love of socially useful labor, to eradicate their bad habits, and at the same time to utilize their physical energies and their intellectual endowments for the increase of the population and the welfare of the country.

Section 3. The labor of the draftees shall be used on projects of general usefulness, such as road construction, railroad tracks, canals, dams, buildings, levees, river constructions, tillage of government or public farms, work in mines, quarries, factories, workshops and the like, according to the sex and age of the draftees.

The lot of the "draftees" in such camps as those in the Dobrudja, Bulgaria's most fertile area, has been described by persons who have escaped. A typical camp is that for women near the city of Tutrakan. It is a network of primitive barracks in each of which are to be found two rows of wooden bunks, each row in three tiers. The prisoners work on a large State-owned farm. The camp director gives the assignments. For example, the prisoner may be told to dig up such and such an acreage of sugar beets, or to spade a specified amount of soil in preparation for the planting of paprika. The daily wage is 900 grams of black bread. Failure to complete the task causes the ration to be diminished. As a rule each inmate works eleven hours a day. At ten P.M. there is a roll call, after which each prisoner solemnly promises to do everything she possibly can "for the building up of the People's Republic of Bulgaria."

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B
●697 There is an austere puritanical fanaticism about the regula-
466 tions which is difficult for an American, inured to doing what he pleases, to comprehend.

Virtually all potential foes of the Communist regime in Bulgaria have been sent to such camps, which means that any person who deviates in the slightest degree from the established Communist norm invites the public prosecutor to get on with incarcerating him. It is difficult to believe that the system is as far-flung and well established as it is; but the Communist authorities themselves have made available a substantial amount
162] of information on its extent. There are at least thirty slave-labor camps in Bulgaria, and it has been estimated that at least 500,000 persons have been confined in them during the seven years of Communist rule. Among the inmates have been whole families—men, women, and children. Before we condemn the Bulgarian Churches for cowardly behavior it may be well to ask what we ourselves might have done in the circumstances.

II

P
648 Rumania was not fully subordinated to the Communist
642 Party until the close of 1947. On the eve of the invasion of the
669] country, which had been the only one to lend full support to the Nazi cause, young King Michael overthrew the Iron Front government and its strong man, General Antonescu, by a *coup d'état*. The new Government, in which a general also served as Premier, accepted the terms of armistice. Nevertheless by March 6, 1945, the Communists were unmistakably in control, although a fellow traveler, Dr. Petru Groza, was selected to head a government in which they had the upper hand. At the Potsdam Conference the United States, Great Britain, and Russia agreed to sign a treaty of peace with Rumania as soon as a government should be formed which was "broadly repre-